

Message Text

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15

ACTION MED-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO AMCONSUL SAO PAULO IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4747

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, BR

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE ON MENINGITIS VACCINATION

FOLLOWING IS PRESS GUIDANCE, TO BE USED ON AN "IF-ASKED" BASIS ONLY, FOR POSSIBLE MEDIA QUERIES ON EMBASSY-BRASILIAN AND CONGEN-SAO PAULO INNOCULATION OF STAFF AND AMERICAN DEPENDENTS. SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Q. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAS BEEN INOCULATING STAFF MEMBERS AGAINST MENINGITIS. IS THIS TRUE?

A. YES. WE HAVE MADE AVAILABLE, ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS, VACCINATIONS AGAINST TYPE C OF MENINGITIS TO AMERICAN AND BRAZILIAN STAFF MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN BRASILIA.

Q. WHY? ARE YOU ESPECIALLY WORRIED ABOUT AN EPIDEMIC AFFECTING THE EMBASSY?

A. THE EMBASSY UNDERTOOK THIS VACCINATION PROGRAM BECAUSE IT HAD A SPECIFIC REASON FOR CONCERN: MENINGITIS IN BRASILIA HAS AFFECTED A NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS BUILDING THE MAJOR ADDITION TO THE EMBASSY CHANCERY BUILDING.

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FOUR OF THESE SUBSEQUENTLY DIED, WITH MENINGITIS CONFIRMED

BY AUTOPSY AS THE CAUSE OF DEATH.SOME MEMBERS OF OUR STAFF WERE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT, AND THERE THUS WAS GOOD REASON TO FEAR THEY HAD BEEN DIRECTLY EXPOSED TO THE DISEASE. IT WAS FOR THIS SPECIFIC REASON THAT IT WAS DECIDED TO PROVIDE VACCINATIONS TO EMBASSY STAFF AND FAMILIES, ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS.

Q. WHERE DID YOU GET THE VACCINE?

A. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN THE VACCINE, OF COURSE, AS IT IS IN SHORT SUPPLY IN THEUNITED STATES AND BRAZIL. THE AMERICAN MANUFACTURER , MERCK, SHARP AND DOHME, HAD ALREADY SHIPPED ITS TOTAL AVAILABLE SUPPLY TO THE GOV BUT BECAUSE OF THE SPECIFIC EXPOSURE PROBLEM I MENTIONED EARLIER, WE WERE ABLE TO OBTAIN ON LOAN, THROUGH THE COOPERATION OF THE GOB, THE LIMITED QUANTITY OF VACCINE WE NEEDED TO VACCINATE STAFF AND DEPENDENTS WHO VOLUNTARILY ACCEPTED INOCULATION. THIS LOAN, TOTALING 1000 DOSES, WILL BE REPAID AS SOON AS SUPPLIES ARE AVAILABLE.

Q. I HEAR THAT THE AMERICAN STAFF AT THE SAO PAULO CONSULATE ALSO HAS BEEN VACCINATED. IS THIS TRUE?

A. YES. A SMALL PORTIONOF THE QUANTITY OBTAINED FOR USE WITHTHE EMBASSY STAFF IN BRASILIA HAS BEEN USED FOR AMERICAN STAFF MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND BRAZILIAN STAFF AT THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN SAO PAULO. THIS TYPE C VACCINE WAS PROVIDED TO THE SAO PAULO STAFF ON THE BASIS OF A SERIOUS LEVEL OF INCIDENCE OF MENINGITIS REPORTED IN THE SAO PAULO AREA.

Q. WAS TYPE "A" VACCINE ADMINISTERED TO AMERICANS AT THE EMBASSY OR CONSULATES?

A. NO. TYPE "A" VACCINE HAS NOT BEEN APPROVED FOR USE BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

Q. DID THE SAO PAULO CONSULATE OR THE BRASILIA EMBASSY MAKE VACCINE AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN PRIVATE CITIZENS WHO RESIDE IN THOSE CITIES?

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A. NO. THESE VACCINATION PROGRAMS WERE UNDERTAKEN STICTLY UNDER THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S MEDICAL PROGRAM WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEALTH OF OFFICIAL PERSONNEL. FURTHERMORE, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME TO OBTAIN A QUANTITY OF TYPE C VACCINE BEYOND THAT NEEDED FOR PROTECTION OF EMBASSY AND CONSULATE STAFF MEMBERS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE PLACED ORDERS WITH THE AMERICAN

MANUFACTURER OF TYPE C VACCINE -- FURTHER LARGE QUANTITIES
OF WHICH MAY BECOME AVAILABLE BY LATE AUGUST. PRODUCTION
AND TESTING OF THIS VACCINE FOR BRAZIL REPORTEDLY IS UNDER
WAY, BUT THE PROCESS CANNOT BE SPEEDED UP, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD.

Q. HAVE ANY AMERICANS IN THE EMBASSY OR THE CONSULATE
CONTRACTED MENINGITIS, TYPE A OR C?

A. TO MY KNOWLEDGE. NO.
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